

REMARKS

This is an Amendment and Reply to the Office Action dated February 27, 2004. The Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of the application and the claims presently at issue in light of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

Claims 1-20 were originally pending in the present application. In reply to a restriction requirement issued by the Examiner, the Applicant elected Claims 1-15 without traverse. Accordingly, Claims 16-20 had been withdrawn from consideration and are now cancelled in this Amendment. By previous amendment, Claims 21-26 had been added to this application, putting Claims 1-15 and 21-26 at issue. In this Amendment, Claims 2, 7, 15 and 23 have also been cancelled, leaving only Claims 1, 3-6, 8-14, 21, 22, and 24-26 at issue.

The Examiner has indicated that Claims 2-5, 7-11, 13-15, and 22-26 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Accordingly, Claims 1, 6, 9, 10, 12, 21, 24 and 26 have been amended.

Beginning with Claim 1, all limitations of allowable Claim 2 have been added before cancelling the claim. Claim 1 should, therefore, now be in condition for allowance. Claims 3-5 depend from Claim 1 and should also be considered allowable. The limitations of allowable Claim 7 have been added to Claim 6 and the dependent claim subsequently cancelled. Claim 6, therefore, should be in condition for allowance. Claim 8 depends from Claim 6 and should also now be considered for allowance.

Allowable Claim 9, originally dependent from Claim 6, was amended to add all the limitations of base Claim 6. Accordingly, Claim 9 is now in proper form for allowance. Claim 10 has been amended to depend from Claim 9 and should also be considered for allowance. Claim 11 remains dependent from Claim 6.

The limitations of allowable Claim 15, originally dependent on Claim 12, have been added to Claim 12 and the dependent claim cancelled. Claim 12, therefore, is in proper form for allowance. Claims 13 and 14 remain dependent on Claim 12 and should be considered for

allowance as well. Claim 21 has been amended to include the limitations of allowable dependent Claim 23, which was subsequently cancelled. Accordingly, Claim 21 is in proper form for allowance. Claim 24 has been amended to depend from Claim 21, while Claims 22 and 25 remain dependent from Claim 21.

Finally, allowable Claim 26, originally dependent on Claim 21, has been rewritten in independent form by adding to it all of the limitations of Claim 21. Therefore, Claim 26 should also be considered to be in proper condition for allowance.

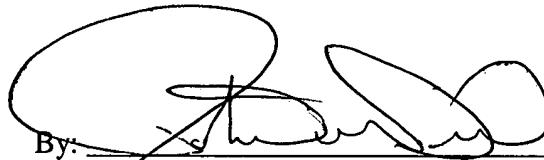
Reconsideration and allowance of the remaining pending claims at the Examiner's earliest convenience is earnestly sought.

CONCLUSION

In light of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the Applicant submits that claims 1, 3-6, 8-14, and 21-26 are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Applicant requests favorable reconsideration and allowance of the present application and all pending claims. A check in the amount of \$83.00 is being submitted herewith to cover the cost of additional independent Claims 9 and 26. If, in the opinion of the Examiner, a telephonic conference would expedite the examination of this matter, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney at (312) 554-3300.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: May 26, 2004

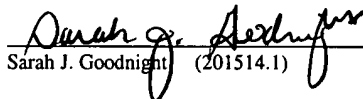
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ATTORNEYS FOR APPLICANT

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail, postage prepaid, in an envelope addressed to: MAIL STOP AF, Commissioner for Patents, PO Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on May 26, 2004.


Sarah J. Goodnight (201514.1)